

White House

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The White House last summer pressured the Central Intelligence Agency to help high administration officials conceal their part in the Watergate conspiracy, a Senate committee has reportedly been told.

According to several fragmentary accounts of closed-door testimony by CIA officials appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee yesterday, the agency was urged by White House aides to extend the "cover" of CIA employment to some of the Watergate break-in team and to help conceal the financing of the operation.

The CIA refused both requests, it was reported.

Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., acting chairman of the committee for the special investigation, disclosed yesterday that former White House aides H. R. Haldeman and John W. Dean III were involved in efforts to implicate the CIA in domestic activities on behalf of the Nixon administration.

SYMINGTON declined, however, to give any details of what Dean and Haldeman tried to do. Last week it emerged from depositions by CIA officials that John D. Ehrlichman, President Nixon's chief domestic aide, personally intervened to win agency cooperation in the 1971 mission which led to the burglary of the psychiatrist of Pentagon Papers case defendant Daniel Ellsberg. Symington promised to disclose more at a news conference scheduled for later today.

It emerged from other sources that the White House triumvirate, apparently with Haldeman taking the lead, sought active CIA help in covering up the role of administration higher-ups in Watergate.

Specific details were scanty, but the scheme reportedly had two main facets:

FIRST, the CIA was to revise its employment records to restore to its payroll two former employees involved in the break-in—E. Howard Hunt, a retired 20-year CIA veteran who was also involved in the Ellsberg burglary, and James W. McCord Jr., another CIA veteran who was among those arrested in the Watergate complex June 17.

At the same time, the CIA was asked to add to its payroll the so-called "Miami Four" — the Cuban-American operatives whom Hunt and coconspirator G. Gordon Liddy had hired as foot soldiers in the scheme. Two of these men also apparently took part in the Ellsberg burglary.

SECOND, the CIA was asked to help cover the tracks of administration officials in using Republican campaign contributions which apparently had been earmarked for

political espionage during the 1972 political season.

In this connection, the CIA was reportedly asked to help cloud traces of about \$89,000 in campaign contributions which were "laundered" through a Mexico City bank account before winding up in the bank account of Bernard Barker, one of the Watergate operatives.

While precise details of the proposals were lacking, the testimony appeared in some respects to support the claim advanced by McCord in a May 7 memo to the special Senate committee investigating Watergate that higher-ups behind the plot tried to put some of the responsibility on the CIA.

THE KEY witness before the committee yesterday was Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, who has been deputy director of the CIA since May 1972 — a month before Watergate.

Speaking to reporters after the morning committee session, Symington revealed for the first time that Haldeman and Dean had been implicated in importuning the CIA on behalf of the White House. These overtures, he said, had been made during Walters' tenure as deputy director.

Ehrlichman had been named last week as the administration official who approached Walters' predecessor, Gen. Robert E. Cushman, to request help for Hunt's operations investigating the Pentagon Papers leak during 1971.

According to affidavits



LT. GEN. WALTERS

and statements from Cushman, now Marine Corps commandant, and CIA director James R. Schlesinger, the association with Hunt was broken off in late August 1971 — just a week before Hunt, Liddy and the Cuban group carried out the burglary of Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office in Los Angeles.

DESPITE this rebuff, however, it apparently emerged from Walters' testimony yesterday that Haldeman and Dean returned to the agency with new approaches after the Watergate burglary, nearly a year later.

From Symington's account of the committee session, Walters had most of his dealings with Haldeman, whose name had not before yesterday been linked with covert administration contacts with the CIA.

Dean's role is still unclear, but a hint may have

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Pressure on CIA Indicated

emerged in U.S. District Court yesterday during a hearing into the disposition of classified documents relating to Watergate which Dean had sequestered in a safe deposit box until turning them over to the court yesterday.

Under questioning from Chief Judge John J. Sirica, Dean disclosed that the papers bore the obscure security classification "Top secret — handle via commint channels." This is an extremely sensitive classification denoting a highly restricted status that is used primarily in the intelligence community.

"COMMINT" refers to "communications intelligence," the highly classified procedure of intercepting foreign diplomatic and intelligence messages that is quietly carried on by both the CIA and the Pentagon's intelligence establishment.

Presumably, Richard M. Helms, who was CIA director during the period of the reported Dean-Ehrlichman-Haldeman overtures, was instrumental in turning down the post-Watergate request for help.

According to Cushman's affidavit in the case last week, Helms at first approved the decision to supply false documents, disguises and other undercover equipment to the Hunt group.

That earlier association was broken off because it was feared Hunt's machinations were involving the CIA in domestic opera-

tions of a sort which are expressly forbidden by the federal law.

Helms, now ambassador to Iran, has been called back to Washington to testify before several congressional committees investigating CIA links with the Ellsberg burglary. He is scheduled to testify tomorrow before Sen. John L. McClellan, D-Ark., sitting as the intelligence subcommittee of the appropriations committee.

IN CONNECTION with the Mexican campaign contribution issue, the Associated Press reported today that Walters postponed FBI interviews with Mexican lawyer Manuel Ogarrio Daguerre and Minneapolis attorney Kenneth H. Dahlberg. The two men's names appeared on the checks that ended up in Barker's account. These checks eventually furnished a link between the wiretappers and the Nixon re-election committee.

Walters told acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray, III that the CIA was interested in the two lawyers. But Gray earlier had been told by Walters' boss, Helms, that the CIA was

not involved in the case.

Gray, according to an authoritative account of statements he made to Senate investigators last week, then arranged a meeting to straighten out the difficulty.

BUT CHRILICHMAN called Gray and canceled the meeting, the Associated Press said, leading to an argument between the two men over who was running the FBI's investigation. According to the account, Ehrlichman conceded that Gray was in charge, but

the meeting was canceled anyway. This was June 28, 11 days after the break-in at Democratic offices at the Watergate building.

On July 6, according to Gray's reported statement to Senate investigators, Gray finally forced from Walters a written admission that in fact the CIA had no interest in Dahlberg or Ogarrio. Gray said he and Walters agreed President Nixon should be informed because "this confusion was just not normal in most investigations."

Gray talked to Nixon by telephone, told him of "confusion" between the CIA and FBI, blamed it on "either carelessness or indifference of White House personnel," and warned Nixon that the situation "could wound the President."

Walters' testimony yesterday apparently confirmed much of Gray's account, and gave a number of details about the coverup attempt, the Associated Press said.